

The
Cooke's
Tale

Of this
Tale
made
Chaucer
na more

Anon he sente his bed and his array
Unto a compier of his owene sort
That lovede dys, and revel and disport,
And hadde a wyf that heeld for contenance
A shoppe, and swyved for hir sustenance....

The wordes of the Hooste to the compaignye.

HOOSTE saugh wel
that the bryghte sonne
The ark of his artificial day
had ronne
The ferthe part, and half
an houre and moore,
And though he were nat
depe expert in loore,
He wiste it was the eichte-
tethe day

Of April, that is messenger to May;
And saugh wel that the shadwe of every tree
Was, as in lengthe, the same quantitee
That was the body erect that caused it;
And therefore by the shadwe he took his wit
That Phebus, which that shoon so clere & bryghte,
Degrees was fyve and fourty clombe on highte;
And for that day, as in that latitude,
It was ten at the klokke, he gan conclude;
And sodeynly he plighte his hors aboute.
Lordynges, quod he, I warne yow, al this route
The fourthe party of this day is gon;
Now for the love of God and of Seint John,
Leseth no tyme, as ferforth as ye may.
Lordynges, the tyme wasteth nyght and day,
And steleth from us, what pryvely slepyng,
And what thurgh negligence in oure wakyng,
As dooth the streem, that turneth nevere agayn,
Descendynge fro the montaigne into playn.

EL kan Senec, and many a philosophre,
Biwaillen tyme moore than gold in cofre;
for losse of catel may recovered be,
But losse of tyme shendeth us, quod he,
It wol nat come agayn, withouten drede,
Namore than wole Malkyns maydenhede,
Whan she hath lost it in hir wantownesse;
Lat us nat mowlen thus in ydelnesse.
Sire Man of Lawe, quod he, so have ye blis,
Telle us a tale anon, as forward is;
Ye been submytted thurgh youre free assent
To stonde in this cas at my juggement.
Acquiteth yow and holdeth youre biheeste,
Thanne have ye doon youre devoir atte leeste.
Hooste, quod he, depardieux ich assente.
To breke forward is nat myn entente.
Biheeste is dette, and I wole holde fayn
Al my biheeste; I kan no better sayn:
for swich lawe as man yeveth another wight

He sholde hymselfen usen it by right;
Thus wole oure text; but natheles certeyn,
I kan right now no thrifty tale seyn,
But Chaucer, thogh he kan but lewedly
On metres and on ryming craftily,
Hath seyde hem in swich Englyssh as he kan
Of olde tyme, as knoweth many a man;
And if he have noght seyde hem, leve brother,
In o book, he hath seyde hem in another,
for he hath toold of lovers up and down
Mo than Ovide made of mencion
In his Epistles, that been ful olde.
What sholde I tellen hem, syn they ben tolde?
In youthe he made of Ceys and Alcione,
And sithe hath he spoken of everichone
Thise noble wyves and thise lovers eke,
Whoso that wole his large volume seke,
Cleped the Seintes Legende of Cupide,
Ther may he seen the large woundes wyde
Of Lucresse, and of Babilan Tesbee;
The swerd of Dido for the false Enee;
The tree of Phillis for hire Demophon;
The pleinte of Dianire and Hermyon;
Of Adriane and of Isiphilee;
The bareyne yle stondynge in the see;
The dreynte Leandre for his Erro;
The teeris of Eleyne, and eek the wo
Of Brixseyde, and of thee, Ladomea;
The crueltee of thee, queene Medea,
Thy litel children hangynge by the hals
for thy Jason that was in love so fals!
O Ypermestra, Penelopee, Alceste,
Your wifhede he comendeth with the beste!
BUT certeinly no word ne writeth he
Of thilke wikke ensample of Canacee,
That loved hir owene brother synfully;
Of swiche cursed stories I sey fy!
Or ellis of Tyro Appollonius,
How that the cursed kyng Antiochus
Brafte his doghter of hir maydenhede,
That is so horrible a tale for to rede,
Whan he hir threw upon the pavement;
And therefore he, of ful avysement,
Nolde nevere write in none of his sermons
Of swiche unkynde abhominacions,
Ne I wol noon reherce, if that I may.
But of my tale how shall I doon this day?
Me were looth be likned, doutelees,
To Muses that men clepe Pierides,
Methamorphoseos woot what I mene;
But natheles, I recche noght a bene
Though I come after hym, with hawebake;
I speke in prose, and lat him rymes make.
And with that word, he with a sobre cheere
Bigan his tale, as ye shal after heere.

THE PROLOGE OF THE TALE OF THE MANNE OF LAW.



HARM! CONDICION OF POVERTE!
With thurst, with coold, with hunger so con-
foundid!
To asken help thee shameth in thyn herte;
If thou noon aske, so soore artow ywoundid,
That verray nede unwrappeth al thy wounde
hid!
Maugree thyn heed, thou most for indigence
Or stele, or begge, or borwe thy despence!

Thow blamest Crist, and seist ful bitterly,
He mysdeparteth richesse temporal;
Thy neighebor thou wytest synfully,
And seist thou hast to life, and he hath al.
Darfay, seistow, somtyme he rekene shal,
Whan that his tayl shal brennen in the gleede,
for he noght helpeth needfulle in hir neede.

Herkne what is the sentence of the wise:
Bet is to dyen than have indigence;
Thyselve neighebor wol thee despise;
If thou be povre, farwel thy reverence!
Yet of the wise man take this sentence:
Alle the dayes of povre men been wikke;
Be war therfore, er thou come to that prikke!

If thou be povre, thy brother hateth thee,
And alle thy freendes fleen from thee, alas!
O riche marchaunts, ful of wele been yee,
O noble, o prudent folk, as in this cas!
Your bagges been nat filld with ambes as,
But with slys cynk, that renneth for youre
chaunce;
At Christemasse myrie may ye daunce!

Ye saken lond and see for yowre wynnynge;
As wise folk ye knowen al thestaat
Of regnes; ye been fadres of tidynges